

The Service-Learning program in rural areas in Taiwan of the Dream It Possible team

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1. Introduction

The students have weak self-knowledge and no specific goals about their future because of the shortage of self-discovery education in Taiwan. This is the common challenge faced by students from primary schools to colleges. In addition, the children in rural areas lack role models and supporting systems. It is more difficult for them to obtain the related courses, and the fact leads to a decline in their competitiveness.

To address the problem, the Dream It Possible team (hereafter called “the team”) designs a Service-Learning program and connects young people (between the ages of 16 and 35) and teenagers (between the ages of 10 and 15).

2. literature review

According to Maslow's view, the purpose of education is to help people to achieve self-actualization. Therefore, self-discovery and career planning education should be compulsory and individually tailored. However, the education system in Taiwan prioritized knowledge transfer and students' academic achievement. Hence, the implementation of self-discovery and career planning education in such situation became more difficult (Jhu, Huei-Cyong, 2016).

On the other hand, an article published in The News Lens mentioned that the government and enterprises had devoted many resources to the rural areas, and in the end, the educational problems were still unresolved. That's because the children don't need “sympathy” but “companion.” It is always the most important thing to accompany the children in rural areas and guide them to find their “why” (Lin, Siao-Jyun, Wu, Yi-Jhen & Wang, Ming-Yue, 2018).

In summary, the education in Taiwan doesn't meet the young people's need of self-actualization because of the deficiency of the related courses, especially for the children in rural areas.

3. Theoretical Framework

This is a community-based Service-Learning program. Notably, each project of the program is carried out with “Six Basic Components of Effective Service-Learning” framework. As shown following (on next page), the framework is a cyclic process:

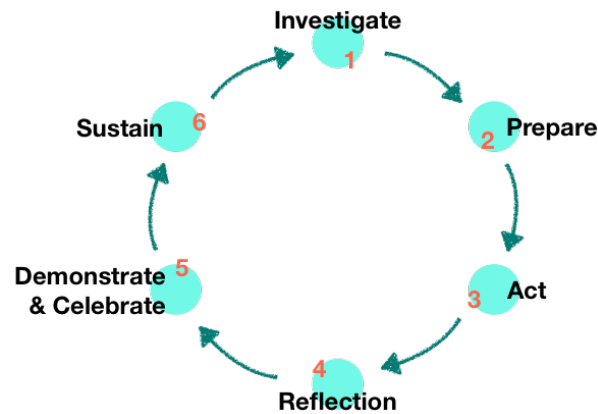


Figure 1. The six Basic Components of Effective Service-Learning Framework

4. Methods/analysis

This section will take the project of Taitung County Pei-Nan Junior High School in Taiwan as an example. The methods used in each phase based on the framework will be described below.

1) Investigate

Establishing effective partnerships is crucial to a community-based program. At the end of 2016, the team approached Pei-Nan Junior High School administrators and the students (hereafter called “the camp participants”), including two nearby communities. Additionally, The See Needs All Round Development Association played an important role in the preliminary work. Lastly, the project called on over 50 young people (hereafter called “the youth members”) from different colleges to conduct this program since 2017. The team consulted partners and comprehensively collected their needs and opinions in this phase.

2) Prepare

All the youth members were equipped with “the PILOT system” which is a set of youth development courses. PILOT stands for “Proactive Individuals: Leaders of Today” hosted by Dr. Judy Yeh. Dr. Yeh is the president of The See Needs All Round Development Association, and she introduced the PILOT system from USA to Taiwan in 2011.

After going through the courses in months, the youth members modified the PILOT system into a new version that suit secondary school students. On the other hand, the youth members were divided into several groups based on their characteristics and abilities, and then the six-month preparation began.

3) Act

In June 2017, the team introduced the courses in the form of a four-day camp to the Pei-Nan Junior High School students for the first time. After that, the courses were executed once every six months, and the camp was totally carried out for three times. The young members share the concepts related to self-discovery and career planning in the camps. Moreover, the team would like to stimulate the camp participants’ senses of mission towards their surrounding communities.

4) Reflect

The Pei-Nan project is the first one that went through all the courses from the PILOT system in rural area in Taiwan. After the three times of camps, the team further determined that the courses are valuable and influent because of the positive feedback from the partnerships. However, they made some adjustments to the project and revised the course structure to a three-stage version. The curriculum is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Updated Three-stage Curriculum Structure

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Course1	DISC personality(I)	DISC personality (II)	DISC personality (III)
Course2	Multiple intelligence	Mission statement (I)	Get into Community
Course3	Find your “why”	Mission statement (II)	Dream Board
Course4	Goal setting	Social skill	Speech skills

5) Demonstrate and Celebrate

The team was recognized and affirmed with the effectiveness of the Pei-Nan project. In response to the mission of the core team members, they officially established the team named "Dream It Possible" in 2018. The establishment of the Dream It Possible team was the best demonstration and celebration of this Service-Learning project, and it also strengthened team members' senses of mission and responsibility.

6) Sustain

The Pei-Nan project will go even further though the first cycle just ended. The team keep in touch with their partnerships and plan to start a new cycle in three years to influence more young people. Additionally, the team also approach schools and communities in other rural areas in Taiwan. Five projects are undertaken at present, and each of them is based on the six-step Service-Learning framework and the three-stage course structure.

5. Results and Discussion

In the Pei-Nan project, most youth members and the camp participants perceived satisfaction with the activities and participation and learned a lot. It will be shown as quantitative data and qualitative outcomes for a detailed explanation as follows:

1) Quantitative data

A. The youth members:

Table 2. The Survey Taken by the Youth Members After Participating in the Project in 2017 and 2018

Statement	Mean
I perceived satisfaction with the participation in the project.	4.6
I know myself better, and I can describe my characteristics, abilities, values and goals after taking part in the project.	4.2
I am determined to pursue my own objective(s) after taking part in the project.	3.8
I am willing to participate in related programs in the future.	4.5

Note. The five-level Likert scale was used in this survey to solicit responses ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree” (1 is Strongly disagree and 5 is Strongly agree).

B. The camp participants:**Table 3.** The Survey Taken by the Camp Participants After Participating in the camps in 2017 and 2018

Statement	Mean
I perceived satisfaction with participating in the activities.	4.8
I know myself better, and I can describe my characteristics, abilities, values and goals after taking part in the project.	4.3
I found out my objective and set out a plan for achieving it through the courses.	3.6
I felt I am “concerned” and built close relationships with the young members in the activities.	4.6

Note. The five-level Likert scale was used in this survey to solicit responses ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree” (1 is Strongly disagree and 5 is Strongly agree).

2) Qualitative outcomes**A. The youth members:**

Service-Learning is a process of “learning by doing.” While guiding the camp participants to explore themselves, the youth members had internal dialogues as well. Assimilating and applying the contents repeatedly strengthened their self-concept.

In accordance with the reciprocity principle, positive feedback from the camp participants increased their self-worth and made them more confident and determined.

Interacting with people and reflecting on ethics developed members’ competencies. In the end, the youth members became more mature than before the project.

The youth members developed values and attitudes, such as respect and empathy, by entering the rural areas. Consequently, most members would be concerned about the issues and take part in relevant actions.

B. The camp participants:

To start with, due to the purposeful curriculum design of the camps, trust and strong relationships between the participants and the youth members were built. The participants devoted themselves entirely to the camp, and the courses could probably achieve the desired effect.

Next, the objectives of the camps are coherent and progressive, therefore participants explored themselves in a systematic way. When they gradually improved self-confidence, they further found and followed their hearts’ true desire. Besides, they started to know that they have opportunities to choose and make dreams come true.

In addition, they were equipped with the habit of being proactive and mindset of grasping the resources that would be beneficial to their goals or dreams. Finally, the difference between the camp participants and the youth members enhanced the cross-cultural awareness and broaden their horizons.

What’s more, some camp participants regarded the youth members as role models and expected themselves to help the need in the future.

6. Conclusions and contributions to theory and practice

The Dream It Possible team has just been established since 2018, while the courses have been introduced into the rural areas in Taiwan since 2017. Therefore, the team may not provide powerful stories or data to support the program at present. Yet, the PILOT system has been implemented in the USA and Taiwan for more than two decades, and the courses have influenced thousands of youth.

However, to make the Service-Learning program more persuasive and theoretical, the author plans to do a further research on the updated course structure and the methods used in the program. In fact, the Dream It Possible team intends to establish a social enterprise or a juridical association in the future for continuous contributions in this area.

Though the team doesn't have many projects in progress now, positive feedback got from each of the partnerships is much beyond expectation. Recognition and supports that the team received not only enhance their sense of mission but also motivate them to share their approaches with more people. They believe changes may come true only when gathering strengths from as many people as possible. Consequently, the Dream It Possible team as a member of community-based program executors dedicates to maximize the value of Service-Learning.

Keywords: Service-Learning; Rural education; Partnerships; Reciprocity; Self-discovery

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